

OPI: S&T/SISPD

DISABLED LIVESTOCK: PROCEDURES FOR HUMANE HANDLING FROM TIME OF
ARRIVAL AT OFFICIAL ESTABLISHMENT PREMISES UNTIL SLAUGHTER

PART ONE--BASIC PROVISIONS

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides FSIS VMOs and inspectors with inspection procedures for ensuring the humane handling of disabled livestock by official establishment employees from the time the livestock enter official establishment premises until the time they are slaughtered by humane methods.

II. CANCELLATION

MPI Manual Subpart 9.10
MPI Bulletin 82-22

III. [RESERVED]

IV. REFERENCES

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978;
sections 304.2, 308.1, 308.3, 309.1(b), 309.2(b); Part 313;
sections 314.1 and 314.3 of the Meat and Poultry Inspection
Regulations.

V. ABBREVIATIONS

IIC Inspector in Charge
VMO Veterinary Medical Officer

VI. DEFINITIONS

A. Ambulatory Disabled Livestock: Livestock capable of walking but with physical impairment such as central nervous system signs, lameness, blindness, and similar conditions.

B. Humane Handling: Handling and slaughter practices that cause a minimum of excitement, pain, injury, or discomfort to livestock.

C. Non-Ambulatory Disabled Livestock: Livestock that cannot rise from a recumbent position (downer) or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, or milk fever.

D. Sufficient Personnel: Establishment personnel who, in the opinion

of the FSIS VMO or inspector, are physically capable of restraining livestock that need to be restrained for the safety of Agency personnel and the humane handling of ambulatory and non-ambulatory disabled livestock.

E. Suitable Equipment: Establishment equipment that is, in the opinion of the FSIS VMO or inspector, capable of enabling establishment personnel to move non-ambulatory disabled livestock with a minimum of excitement, pain, or injury. For example: forklift or bobcat-type vehicles and self-propelled tractors capable of pulling stone boats (sleds) or similar conveyances, those conveyances themselves, and holding chutes; a voltmeter or other suitable equipment which is capable of verifying voltage of electric prods attached to AC current.

F. Suitable Restraints: Establishment-provided restraints which are, in the opinion of the FSIS VMO or inspector, capable of preventing injury to Agency personnel when performing ante-mortem inspection and minimizing excitement, pain, or injury to livestock upon movement. For example: holding chutes, squeeze pens, and swinging gates.

VII. POLICY

Authorized FSIS VMOs and inspectors monitor disabled livestock handling procedures carried out by official establishment employees to ensure that livestock that show signs of physical impairment or that are non-ambulatory are set apart and humanely slaughtered. They also ensure that the official establishment has adopted humane handling and slaughter practices for all livestock in accordance with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978.

Conscious disabled livestock cannot be dragged; however, they may be moved to the designated covered area or pen with sufficient personnel and suitable equipment for ante-mortem inspection. FSIS has no regulatory authority over livestock on transport vehicles, which are not considered to be premises of the "official establishment." If sufficient personnel and suitable equipment cannot be provided by the official establishment, the livestock must be humanely killed before movement on the official establishment premises, condemned, and disposed of in accordance with FSIS regulations.

Unconscious disabled livestock cannot receive ante-mortem inspection. They must be humanely killed, condemned, and disposed of in accordance with FSIS regulations.

PART TWO--HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK PRIOR TO SLAUGHTER

I. GENERAL FSIS INSPECTION PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING

HUMANE HANDLING OF DISABLED LIVESTOCK

A. Disabled Livestock [general].

FSIS personnel will:

1. Grant permission for movement of disabled livestock on the official establishment premises after establishment has provided sufficient personnel and suitable equipment to ensure humane handling.

2. Monitor disabled livestock handling procedures carried out by establishment employees to ensure humane handling of disabled livestock from the time that livestock enter the premises of the official establishment until they are humanely slaughtered.

3. Ensure that establishment provides sufficient personnel to handle (separate, move, and restrain) disabled livestock with a minimum of excitement, injury, and discomfort.

4. Ensure that establishment management provides equipment and restraints suitable for humanely moving and restraining disabled livestock and other livestock unable to move.

5. Ensure that facilities are acceptable and are maintained in good condition:

- a. Livestock pens, driveways, and ramps free from sharp corners, sharp or protruding objects, loose boards or broken planking, and unnecessary openings where livestock may be injured.

- b. Slip resistant floors, cleated ramps, and sand for use during winter months are examples of acceptable construction and maintenance.

- c. Covered pens sufficient, in the opinion of the VMO/inspector, to protect U.S. Suspect livestock (dying, diseased, and disabled) from adverse climatic conditions while awaiting disposition, after establishment personnel have separated them from normal ambulatory animals.

- d. Sufficient space in holding pens to prevent overcrowding that might cause livestock to slip, fall, or become injured and to allow livestock held overnight to lie down.

- e. Protective padding or other soft surface where needed to absorb shock and minimize pain and injury when unloading disabled livestock from transport vehicles. For example: foam rubber pads, wood shavings, sand, or straw.

6. Ensure that establishment personnel separate disabled livestock from normal ambulatory livestock and place the disabled livestock in appropriate covered pens.

7. Ensure that establishment personnel drive ambulatory livestock with a minimum of excitement and discomfort.

a. Livestock shall not be driven faster than a normal walking speed.

b. Electric prods, canvas slappers, or other implements used to drive animals shall be used as little as possible. Electric prods attached to AC current shall be reduced to the lowest effective voltage not to exceed 50 volts AC, as verified with a voltmeter or other suitable equipment.

c. Pipes, sharp objects, or other items which would cause injury or unnecessary pain to the animal shall not be used to drive livestock.

8. Ensure approved stunning methods are applied to livestock prior to being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.

9. Ensure that any disabled livestock are protected from adverse weather conditions after they enter official establishment premises. In addition, livestock shall have access to water in all holding pens and, if held longer than 24 hours, access to feed.

10. Ensure that any livestock stunned without receiving ante-mortem inspection be humanely killed, condemned, and disposed of in accordance with FSIS regulations.

11. Ensure that establishment personnel tag as "U.S. Suspects" all seriously crippled, disabled and downer livestock that need further observation before slaughter. "Suspects" shall remain identified until ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections and proper dispositions have been made. Tags will be removed only by Agency personnel.

12. Ensure that establishment personnel tag as "U.S. Rejected" any equipment, walkways, ante-mortem pens, or other areas if their construction, maintenance, or use contribute to the inhumane handling of livestock. Tagged items or areas will not be used and tags will not be removed by Agency personnel until the establishment operator has provided satisfactory assurances that the situation will be corrected.

13. FSIS inspection personnel will stop slaughter operations whenever any instance of humane handling or slaughter regulations

violation is observed.

The VMO will:

14. Permit stunning and removal for slaughter of "U.S. Suspect" livestock that have passed ante-mortem inspection to prevent further suffering.

B. Movement of Ambulatory Disabled Livestock.

FSIS personnel will:

1. Ensure that establishment personnel handle and move disabled livestock with a minimum of excitement and discomfort.
2. Ensure that establishment personnel avoid conditions that may cause livestock to slip or fall while in walkway or chute.

C. Movement of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Livestock.

FSIS personnel will:

1. Ensure that, after livestock have been removed from the transport vehicles, sufficient establishment personnel use suitable equipment and restraints to move conscious non-ambulatory disabled livestock to the designated ante-mortem areas or pens in a humane manner.

The VMO will:

2. Examine all disabled livestock, including "downers" and those that show signs of trauma, in designated ante-mortem areas or pens.

D. Notifications and Reports

FSIS personnel will:

1. Notify establishment management of the reasons for taking action whenever a violation of humane handling, stunning, or slaughter is observed and the equipment or areas where the incident occurred has been tagged as "U.S. Rejected." If the situation is corrected by the establishment and assurances, acceptable to the IIC, are received that it will not recur, FSIS inspection personnel will remove tags and permit slaughter operations to resume.
2. Refer any incident that is not resolved at the establishment level to the next higher level of FSIS supervision.
3. Prepare a written report of the incident, in either case.

The report will be completed by the IIC and sent through proper channels to the Area Supervisor, who will maintain a file on the incident. The IIC's written report will include:

- a. Nature of the violation.
 - b. Name of establishment operator who was notified.
 - c. Length of time operations were stopped in any tagged areas.
 - d. Corrections made or assurances given.
 - e. Indication of whether problems were resolved at establishment level or referred to higher FSIS supervision.
4. Area Supervisors will maintain a file of the reports of violations of inhumane handling, stunning, or slaughter requirements.

II. SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL

The FSIS VMO or inspector will ensure that the establishment provides sufficient personnel who are physically capable of moving and restraining livestock that need to be restrained for the humane handling of ambulatory and non-ambulatory livestock and the safety of Agency personnel.

III. SUITABLE EQUIPMENT AND RESTRAINTS

A. Equipment:

1. Ensure that establishment provides, properly maintains, and uses suitable equipment to humanely move disabled livestock. Suitable equipment includes, but is not limited to: holding chutes, forklift or bobcat-type vehicles, stone boats (sleds), self-propelled tractors capable of pulling sleds or similar conveyances, wheeled carts, or any other such equipment appropriate for the heights, distances, and the type of livestock to be moved.
2. Ensure that sleds, wheeled carts, or any other equipment whether self-propelled or pulled by other vehicles are strong and large enough so disabled livestock can be moved in a humane manner.
3. Ensure that establishment provides and properly maintains a voltmeter or other suitable equipment capable of verifying voltage of electric prods attached to AC current.
4. Ensure that equipment is maintained in a clean condition.

B. Restraints.

1. Ensure that establishment provides, properly maintains, and uses suitable restraints to humanely restrain disabled livestock being moved or inspected and to prevent injury to FSIS personnel.

2. Ensure that restraints used to protect disabled animals and FSIS personnel are maintained in a clean condition.

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